

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Duncan Hunter, Chairman

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CONTACT

Harald Stavenas

Meghan Wedd

(202) 225-2539

OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN DUNCAN HUNTER

Full Committee Hearing on U.S. Cooperative Threat Reduction and Non-Proliferation Programs

Today, the committee will receive testimony on the Department of Defense U.S. Cooperative Threat Reduction and Department of Energy Nuclear Non-Proliferation programs. These programs combined comprise about \$1.75 billion of the national defense budget being requested by the President for Fiscal Year 2004.

In 1991, following the dramatic end of the former Soviet empire, the world – and the United States in particular – faced an unprecedented historical opportunity to directly reduce the threats posed by the vast arsenal of strategic weapons the Soviet Union left behind.

Using imagination and persuasion, a key group of members of Congress gave birth to a series of initiatives designed to capitalize on this opportunity. By engaging the emerging former Soviet states with a novel bargain, we entered into new strategic partnerships designed to reduce this dangerous arsenal of strategic weapons by diverting U.S. defense dollars for this purpose.

Looking just at the DOD Cooperative Threat Reduction or CTR program, now twelve years and \$7 billion later, it is without dispute that this program has accomplished a great deal to live up to its objectives. However, it also clear that – as is the case eventually with most government programs – the CTR program has strayed from its original purpose at the same time that deeply disturbing instances of mismanagement and negligence are emerging.

The purpose of this hearing today is to review the state of these programs by examining how they have evolved from the initial focus on the short-term high-priority elimination of former Soviet-era strategic nuclear systems, to today's constantly expanding scope which includes all manner of weapons of mass destruction-related activities, sometimes only tangentially related to the original purpose or to the principle of reducing direct military threats to the United States.

We shall also review how it is that the DOD CTR program bankrolled two hugely expensive building projects in Russia that have led to almost 200 million of U.S. defense dollars being wasted without achieving an ounce of threat reduction as intended.

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Finally, we will examine the \$1.75 billion budget request for fiscal year 2004 which calls for an overall increase of 24 percent over the previous fiscal year, while at the same time reducing the funds proposed for the elimination of former Soviet nuclear strategic systems.

These questions and others deserve the careful attention of the Committee and this Congress. If we are to continue to support diverting billions of dollars from the U.S. defense budget for these activities, we must ensure that the investment can be directly traced to an actual tangible reduction in military threats. This is the context which we must use to evaluate this program, as we have an obligation to ensure that the original “novel bargain” of 1991 still passes muster today.

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